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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that the failure of second and foreign language educators to keep abreast of developments in curriculum and instructional design has led to inefficient teaching and consequently to underachievement in many classes of English as a second language (ESL). Of all the factors influencing second language achievement, it is maintained that teachers can control only the learner's motivation and the quality of instruction, areas in which the linguist has little to offer. The ESL teaching profession must now turn to educational theorists to find the answers to most problems in the foreign language classroom. There needs to be a return to a systematic, objective-based approach using lesson plans and operationally defined objectives. Collaboration with researchers in the general field of teaching will be necessary to develop effective language teaching theory, and bridges need to be built between departments of linguistics and departments of curriculum and instruction. (MSE)

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EDUCATIONAL THEORY AND TESL/TEFL: WHERE THE ANTIPATHY HAS LED TO

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This paper argues that the failure of second and foreign language educators to keep abreast of developments in curriculum and instruction design has led to inefficient teaching and consequently to underachievement in many ESL/EFL classrooms. Evidence to support this thesis is cited from current existing material. It is also maintained that of all the factors that influence second and foreign language achievement, teachers can only have control over the learners' motivation and the quality of instruction. The linguist has little to offer in these two areas. If this is accepted, we must turn to main stream educationists, especially those working in curriculum and instruction design for advice. It becomes imperative, then, to call for more co-operation betwee.. TEFL/ers and the generalists.

1. Linguistics and teaching ESL/EFL

It must be owned that the ESL/EFL scene is dominated, perhaps overwhelmed by controversies over the nature of language and language acquisition. Indeed, the changes in ESL/EFL methodology reflect corresponding changes in our thinking about language and language acquisition. Language teaching is largely influenced by three strongly related fields: Linguistics, psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics. "In the U.S. it is generally assumed that the body of knowledge that TEFL, indeed all language teaching, whether it be the teaching of the first or second language must rest on is linguistics, including psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics" (Womack 1969:13). This emphasis on linguistics and psycholinguistics as the main sources of our knowledge about language teaching has taken away the attention of language educators from another very important source, namely education science. Bruce Pattison (1968:9) has warned us that, "The substitution of linguistics for education as the governing

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factor in language teaching will be disastrous." It is quite a difficult task to try to ascertain if this statement has been prophetic or not. At the same time it is not difficult to produce evidence to the effect that SL/FL programmes are facing tremendous difficulties in that foreign language learners are achieving but limited success. (Pimsleur 1963, Jakobovits 1968: 182, 1970: 248, El Fadil 1975, Bangole 1977, Carroll 1982).

2. What causes underachievement?

It is still important to ascertain the causes of this underachievement. It is generally accepted that four factors determine success in learning a foreign language, namely, general intelligence, aptitude, motivation and quality of instruction. (Jakobovits 1970:104). It can be argued that teachers have control neither over their pupils' intelligence nor over their aptitude, but that they can influence the motivation of their pupils (Allwright 1977:273, Pinnochairo 1977:3) as well as the quality of instruction. Gardner and Lambert (1972:1), however, dismiss method as a determining factor in foreign language success on the ground that students in the same class and taught by the same method attain different levels of achievement. This argument can be rejected for a number of reasons. For one thing, the proportion of achievers as compared to under-achievers is not always made clear. It is possible and, indeed, can be substantiated by figures (El Fadil 1975:12, Carroll 1982:5) that the proportion of achievers is relatively small if compared with the under-achievers. For another, it is not very important whether we are using the audio-lingual method, the cognitive-code method or the functional approach, but what really matters is how efficiently this or that method is being applied. As Mackay (1965: Introduction) points out, we have to distinguish between "the method and the teaching of it." Thirdly, motivation can be an effect of success in foreign languages and not a cause (Pimsleur 1963:44). It is also possible that lack of motivation can be the result of bad teaching (Jakobovits 1970:84). Fourth,

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there is evidence to the effect that instrumentally oriented students achieve equally well as integratively oriented students (Lukmani 1972:272, El Fadil 1975:286).

3. Assigning Roles

Therefore there are at least two factors which teachers can control, namely, motivation and the quality of instruction. The obvious question to ask is how teachers can enhance the motivation of their pupils and improve the quality of their teaching. Presently teachers are seeking this help from linguistics, psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics (Finnochairo 1977:3, Rivers and Temperlay 1978: Preface, Broughton, et al 1978, 1980:38). However, there are some language educators, and the writer is one of them, who strongly argue that language descriptions, however powerful, cannot show teachers how to teach foreign languages (Wardhaugh 1969:11, Krohn 1970:103-108, Paulston 1976:6). If we are to define some of the roles and functions of the linguists, the sociolinguists, the psycholinguists and the instruction designers, we can say this; it is the role of both the linguists and the sociolinguists to describe language not only as a system, but as one that works in a social context. The linguist and the sociolinguist have to tell us: "What does a person have to "know" in order to have mastered a foreign language properly? (Johnson 1982:20). The psycholinguists will have to enlighten us on how second and foreign languages are learnt. But it rests upon instruction designers, i.e., the generalists, to propound a theory of second and foreign language teaching based on the findings of the linguists, the sociolinguists and the psycholinguists.

Unfortunately, the wall that separates language educators from the education sciences becomes higher and higher with every generation of new language theories and descriptions and as language educators herald the new insights into language as the long awaited panacea for the troubled foreign language classroom, they are thus cut off from the field of education science, the

one area where it is most likely to find answers to most of the problems of the foreign language classroom. Politzer (1981:31) has observed that:

> There is some truth to the statements that (1) foreign language teaching researchers do not utilize the sophisticated paradigms that have been developed by the generalists and that (2) the generalists do not utilize the language teaching field for this research. With occasional and rare exceptions the fields of general teaching research and foreign language teaching research tend to ignore each other. However, the reason for this phenomenon is not simply ignorance or narrowmindedness.

4. Some faulty instruction practices

One of the effects of this phenomenon is that not only most TEFL manuals and programmes, but also some teacher's guidebooks advocate certain teaching techniques viz pair practice, role play, problem solving, yet they seldom propound a systematic, objective-based approach to teaching as instruction designers exhort us to do. Furthermore, we rarely see a lesson plan in TEFL manuals. On the rare occasions when we do fall upon one, we notice that the lesson plan deviates in many ways from the standards and principles drawn up by the generalists. If we compare the lesson plan in Broughton et al (1978, 1980:179) with the lesson plan in Gagne and Briggs (1974, 1979:196-215) we can perceive the gap between instruction designers and TESL/TEFL practitioners. For one thing the plan in Broughton et al (1978, 1980:179) does not state the lesson objectives operationally. The statement of aims says: "1. Revise 'giving directions' 2. Punctuation of direct speech via picture story" (Broughton et al 1978, 1980:179). It may be observed that the first statement describes the teaching activity while the second statement tells us about the object to be taught, rather than the expected outcomes. Hence it is very difficult

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for the teacher, or any other observer to ascertain if the learners have, in fact, attained the stipulated objectives. Popham and Baker (1970:43-44) advise us that:

> The more clearheaded the teacher is about what he is attempting to accomplish with his learners, the more easily he can accomplish it and the more readily he can judge whether he has accomplished it. There is undoubtedly a positive relationship between teacher's clarity of instructional goals and the quality of his teaching.

Instances of lack of expertise in such important questions of instruction as writing operational statements of objectives (Gagne and Briggs 1974, 1979) can be seen in any of the teachers' books from either the Crescent English Course or Evans Brothers, New System English. The authors of these two courses have wisely elected to write aims for each of the lessons of their course, but have, by and large, been unsuccessful in writing down useful statements of objectives, simply because most of the statements they have written describe not the intended educational outcomes, but rather the process of teaching. Instead of advising both teachers and pupils what the latter will be able to accomplish at the end of the lesson or unit, they describe what the teacher will be doing during the lesson. Let us take as an example the statement of aims in period 2 of unit 1 in Evans Brothers, New System English (1982:35) which says: "1. to teach the vowel sound in 'leave'. 2. to give more practice in saying who you are. 3. to teach how to write." It can easily be observed that all of these three statements are vague and consequently of limited use. If we consider the first of these aims we can see that it is not clear whether the intention is to make the learners recognize the vowel sound in leave, or to make them pronounce the vowel (i:) in leave, or even to make them pronounce the whole word. All these interpretations are possible and that is why it is nigh impossible to ascertain if this aim has been

achieved or not. If this statement is to be made more useful, we will have to be clear in our minds about what we want the learners to accomplish at the end of the lesson. For instance, the authors could have written: By the end of the lesson all pupils will be able to recognize and pronounce the vowel sound in 'leave' as contrasted with the vowel sound in 'live'. In this way we have a better chance of evaluating the effectiveness of instruction.

Besides the fact that operationally stated objectives help in evaluating the success of instruction they are useful in at least three more ways. First, when specific outcomes are indicated, it is easy to select the content, strategies and tactics that are most effective in reaching each objective. Secondly, we can be more realistic about what we hope to achieve in a certain period of time. Thirdly, the needs of different students for either remedial work or more advanced learning outcomes can more easily be determined, planned for and evaluated (Hannah and Michaelis 1977:25).

It still remains to be said that TESL/TEFL practitioners need to acquaint themselves with the "sophisticated paradigms developed in general teaching research." (Politzer 1981:31). They have to come out of their linguistic shells and collaborate with researchers in the field of general teaching research with the hope of developing an effective language teaching theory. Bridges will have to be built between departments of linguistics and departments of curriculum and teaching methods. If such bridges are not built, we are likely to be in for another decade of ineffectiveness in the TESL/TEFL classroom.

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